

King County Healthcare Coalition Monthly Update

June 27, 2006
Healthcare Coalition Monthly Update

The Healthcare Coalition planning effort is focused on (1) building the infrastructure to support greater coordination across the community's diverse health system, (2) developing coordinated surge capacity strategies and plans, and (3) supporting pandemic preparedness planning throughout the healthcare community.

The Healthcare Coalition is comprised of 28 health care organizations and agencies. The next meeting of executives from Coalition member organizations will be in September or October. Current priorities include pandemic flu and surge planning, strengthening the governance structure through the creation of the Executive Council, recruiting more Coalition members from non-hospital providers, and developing an on-going budget, staffing plan, and work groups. There is now a web page for the Coalition that can be accessed through the Public Health website (www.metrokc.gov/health/hccoalition). (Coalition staff contacts – Richard Marks 206-322-0971 and Carmen Alvarado 206-296-5079)

WORKGROUP/ COMMITTEE INFORMATION & UPDATES

Ambulatory Care Preparedness Work Group (ACPWG)

(Staff contacts – Dr. Gary Goldbaum, PHSKC at 206-296-4991 & Aimée Welch, PHSKC at 206-205-4145)

The group is developing surge capacity plans for ambulatory care and triage services. They are also developing strategies that will expand outpatient care and telephone triage and reduce demand on hospital emergency rooms and inpatient facilities.

- The Work Group expects to complete its initial plans by the end of July and will then focus on implementation.

Critical Care Work Group

(Staff contact – Dr. Jeff Duchin at 206-296-4814, Mark Tonelli, MD at tonelli@u.washington.edu)

This work group, which is comprised of Critical Care Directors from Coalition hospitals, held its last meeting in February. Public Health will be contracting with Dr. Mark Tonelli, from the University of Washington to develop altered standards of care and clinical and staffing guidelines for mass critical care.

- Dr. Tonelli will initiate his work in June 2006 and will present his preliminary recommendations to the Work Group in the fall.

Legal Work Group

(Staff contact – Amy Eiden, PHSKC at 206-205-5091)

This group has been recently formed and is comprised of attorneys representing hospitals and government entities in King County. The Legal Work Group has started review of King County protocol for delivery of health officer isolation orders to hospitalized persons

- The group recently conducted a work session with attorneys from state and other legal jurisdictions to review progress on written Q&A about current public health and emergency laws.
- They have also met with King County Medical Society/Bar Association committee to discuss liability risks during periods of altered standards of care.

Medical Directors Committee

(Staff contact – Dr. Jeff Duchin, PHSKC at 206-296-4814)

The Medical Directors Committee has been recently formed and held its first meeting on May 1. This committee will provide expertise and leadership for issues related to clinical care during any health emergency where large-scale emergency response and/or changes in routine healthcare delivery are necessary. The Medical Directors will review and develop clinical policies, protocols, practice standards, and plans that are relevant to emergency response.

Region 6 Hospital Emergency Preparedness Committee

(Staff contact – Cynthia Dold, PHSKC at 206-205-0456)

This committee meets monthly to discuss a variety of emergency preparedness issues. The Committee is continuing to work on a comprehensive assessment of hospital capacity, including surge capacity. The assessment has stimulated more comprehensive discussions about surge strategies at local hospitals. The Committee has also held meetings with suppliers to discuss strategies to ensure availability of needed medical supplies and pharmaceuticals during emergencies.

PROJECT INFORMATION & UPDATES

Alternate Facilities Project

(Public Health contact – Michael Loehr at 206-205-5012)

Public Health is in the process of hiring a project manager. The work will commence in August 2006. The project manager will work with partners to establish emergency facilities that can provide triage, ambulatory care, observation, and palliative care. These facilities will be designed to supplement the regular health care system in the event of emergencies that generate demand that exceeds existing surge capacity, i.e. “super surge”.

Regional Medical Resource Center (RMRC)

(Staff contact – Allison Schletzbaum, 206-731-6213)

The RMRC is the linchpin for coordinated operational preparedness and response. The Center will monitor and distribute human and medical resources among participating Healthcare Coalition organizations and facilities based on the objectives of the emergency response.

- Planning and development of the RMRC will commence in July 2006. The RMRC Project Manager will work in collaboration with the Region 6 Hospital Preparedness Committee, PHSKC and other key partners to develop the RMRC.

King County Call Center Project

(Project Manager, Joe Cropley at 206-517-2383)

This project is being developed to document the existing call center capacity of participating health-related and medical organizations and to develop strategies to increase capacity. The Project will address medical phone advice and triage, as well as other public information needs. The project will involve the participation of 911 and 211 systems, Group Health and Evergreen Hospital, the Red Cross, the Office of Emergency Management, Sound Telecom, and Public Health. Joe Cropley, from the Washington Poison Center, is the Project Manager for the Call Center Project. Joe commenced work in mid June, so is in the early stages of planning.

OTHER UPDATES

- Public Health is trying to arrange a meeting with insurers to discuss a number of insurance and reimbursement issues that have been raised in surge planning. Critical issues are reimbursement for telephone consultations, relaxation of network rules, pre-certification and authorization, and timely filing of claims.
- One of the emerging issues that the Coalition will need to address is education and training for healthcare workers. The Medical Directors Group raised the concern that a substantial portion of the workforce may stay home during a pandemic outbreak to care for family or to prevent becoming infected. Plans need to be developed to protect healthcare workers, to address their concerns, to educate them about their rights and responsibilities, and to ensure that they are willing and able to work during an emergency response.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

- Ambulatory Care Preparedness Working Group Meeting
July 18th from 7:30 – 10:30am @ the King County Medical Society
- Medical Directors Meeting
July 20th from 3:00 – 4:30pm @ Swedish Medical Center
- Region 6 Hospital Emergency Preparedness Committee
July 27th from 7:30 – 10:00am @ RCECC
- Healthcare Coalition Steering Committee Meeting
August 7th from 11:00am – 1:00pm @ the Wells Fargo Center

For more information about the Healthcare Coalition or this update, contact:

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Public Health Seattle & King County Pandemic Flu Monthly Update

Public Health Seattle-King County (PHSKC) is leading a multi-faceted, community-wide planning process. The work of the Coalition is a critical part of the larger planning process. In addition to its work with the Coalition, Public Health's pandemic flu planning efforts include the following areas:

- Decision making/legal authorities
- Public Health continuity planning, workforce activation
- Flu training/exercise program
- Business partners continuity
- School partners continuity
- Vulnerable population partners
- Public information
- EMS-911
- Medical Examiner
- Mass Dispensing/vaccination
- Avian flu control
- CD Epi/Surveillance

Communications resources:

Free personal and family pandemic flu preparedness brochures: *Preparing for Pandemic Influenza: A Personal and Family Guide* is an excellent resource for educating employees about the potential impact of pandemic flu, and giving them the tools and the encouragement to prepare now. Free copies (including delivery) in English and Spanish are available through the Washington State Department of Health Web site at www.doh.wa.gov/panflu/family_brochure.htm (click on General Store Website link to order brochures).

Stop Germs posters for common areas – promoting frequent hand washing, covering coughs, and staying home when sick. Examples available on the web at www.metrokc.gov/health/stopgerms/index.htm. To order a supply of posters, contact Dolores Rossman of Public Health's Stop Germs campaign team at 206-205-3310 or dolores.rossman@metrokc.gov.

Free CD-based risk communications training: When crisis strikes, are we ready to speak to the public right away, even before all the facts are known? Public Health - Seattle & King County's Advanced Practice Center has developed a new first messages emergency risk communications CD training, *Speak First: Communicating Effectively in Times of Crisis and Uncertainty*. This product has been developed to support public health professionals, businesses and other community partners, first responders, policy makers and others in learning, adopting and teaching best practices for delivering first messages in the heat of crises. We are making copies available to business and community partners at no charge; please contact James Apa, Public Health - Seattle & King County Communications Manager, at 206-205-5442 or james.apa@metrokc.gov.

Subscribe to pandemic flu webpages: Our Public Health – Seattle & King County pandemic flu website continues to be updated with the most current resources and information: www.metrokc.gov/health/pandemicflu. Subscribe to the pages today and receive alerts via e-mail when updates are made to the site. It's an easy way to stay informed about local planning efforts.

On Going Planning Issues:

- PHSKC is coordinating with Washington State Emergency Management regarding whether and how fuel supplies across the state will be prioritized during a pandemic. We're also assessing the response plans for the Washington State Ferry System and will share details with you as we get them.
- PHSKC is drafting written guidance for businesses and government agencies regarding infection control measures, including the use of masks, that can be incorporated into pandemic response plans. We will also pursue development of a training video for businesses and government agencies on symptom recognition and infection control practices for facility managers and supervisors.

(PHSKC Contact, Michael Loehr, 206-205-5012)